

COUNTY, STATE COMBINE TO HEAD OFF WEST NILE VIRUS

Mayor Alan Arakawa and State Department of Health District Health Officer Dr. Lorrin Pang today announced a joint county-state and Maui Humane Society initiative designed to provide early detection of West Nile Virus (WNV) should the virus make the leap to Hawai'i.

"Dr. Lorrin Pang approached us a few weeks ago with the idea of combining our resources for the surveillance and pick-up of any dead birds found on the island," said Mayor Arakawa. "Early detection of West Nile Virus is critical to allowing health officials to respond quickly if the virus is found in bird and mosquito populations to prevent human and domestic animal infections. As the safety of our entire community and our visitors is involved here, we gladly agreed to participate and have received the concurrence of our county base yard staff."

The Department of Health reported that in late summer 1999, the first domestically acquired human cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) were documented on the east coast of the United States. Public health surveillance tracked the westward spread of WNV throughout much of the U.S. between 2000 and 2003. By the end of 2003, WNV activity had been identified in 46 states and the District of Columbia.

"West Nile Virus could be introduced to Hawaii either by an infected mosquito or an infected domestic or migratory bird," said Dr. Pang. "The effect of West Nile Virus on the endangered bird population of Hawaii could be devastating. By getting a jump on surveillance we are hoping to prevent it, and we are asking help from the community."

"West Nile Virus is spread in a bird-mosquito cycle," Pang said. "When people are bitten by infected mosquitoes, they can become infected, but cannot continue the cycle to infect new mosquitoes, nor can they spread it to other humans (except by blood transfusion). Large mammals, such as horses and cattle are also at risk for the disease, as well as some reptiles."

Although few infected humans will become severely ill, with high mosquito transmission rates there might be high human morbidity and mortality in Hawaii.

"Most people infected with WNV will not have any type of illness," said Pang. "It is estimated that about 20 percent of people who become infected will develop West Nile fever, the symptoms include: fever, headache, fatigue and body aches, occasionally with a skin rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands. The symptoms of a severe infection (West Nile encephalitis or meningitis) include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. Approximately 1% of West Nile fever cases will progress to the more severe infections."

The Department of Health, along with various other agencies in the state, is currently conducting mosquito and bird surveillance for WNV.

Dead bird surveillance is the most sensitive early detection system for WNV activity, and should include the timely reporting and analysis of dead bird sightings and submission of individual birds for WNV testing.

The Department of Health and the County of Maui are asking Maui residents Maui to assist in this effort by delivering dead birds to the sites listed below for WNV testing.

Specimens

Dead birds in good condition (unscavenged and without obvious decomposition or maggot infestation) which may have died from natural causes (no road/cat kills) may be submitted for laboratory testing. As with all dead animals, carcasses should be handled carefully, avoiding direct contact with the skin. The following procedures are suggested to keep hands clean when collecting a specimen:

- Use rubber gloves when picking up dead birds. If gloves are not available, insert hand into a plastic bag.
- Place each bird in a bag, tie shut then place inside a second bag and tie shut (more than one individually bagged bird can be placed in the second bag).
- Place bagged bird in a cool spot (such as in a bucket containing ice).
- Take the bird to a collection site.
- At the collection site, you will be asked to complete a simple form detailing when and where the bird was found.

The best surveillance will include a variety of bird species, and the DOH will accept any species of dead birds. The birds will be shipped to DOH State Laboratory Division on Oahu for testing.

Drop Off Sites

Drop off sites for Dead Bird Surveillance Bagged birds may be brought to the following locations. Due to the time required to transport and process the birds, no birds will be accepted on weekends, holidays or after regular business hours. Please call ahead to be sure county personnel will be on site when you arrive.

Lahaina Base Yard (weekdays 7-11 am, 12-3 pm)
3310 Honoapiilani Highway
661-0501

DOH District Health Laboratory (weekdays 7:45 am-4:30 pm)
Wailuku Health Center
121 Mahalani Street
984-2131

Makawao Base Yard (weekdays 7 am-12 noon, 1 pm-3 pm)
Across St. Joseph's Church on Makawao Drive
572-7272

Maui Humane Society (Tues - Fri, 8 am-4:30 pm)
Mokulele Highway
877-3680

"Dead birds in an area may mean that West Nile Virus is circulating between the birds and the mosquitoes in that area," said Dr. Pang. "The public can play an important role in monitoring the virus by delivering dead birds to the Department of Health. Prevention and surveillance measures are being taken by DOH to monitor and control the potential for disease. This is a public health concern, and the whole community needs to be aware."

For more information about West Nile Virus or the dead bird surveillance program, you can call the Maui District Health Office Disease Investigation Branch at 984-8213.

Or visit the [State Department of Health](#) website for more information.